POST INTERNET-FOLKLORE

How has the experience of narrative been affected by the network?

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Introduction

In stories we are explorers of 'secondary worlds' (Warner 2014:4) but it has been a long time since the line between these secondary worlds and our primary, physical reality, was distinct. With every new technology we have stepped forward and adopted new methods to record and disseminate stories and in doing so blurred the lines. The rise of the internet and by extension the continued uploading of ourselves into virtual spaces has allowed internet folklore to thrive in the ever growing grey space between the realities of stories and those who tell and listen to them.

This changing relationship with story has created new networked processes for both storytellers and audiences, and in this essay the term Post Internet-Folklore will be used to understand this as a set of experiences. This essay aims to demonstrate how the processes of post internet-folklore is utilised by practitioners seeking to tell stories within their practise. Katrina Palmer's 'End Matter' and Apichatpong Weerasethakul's 'Primitive' will be investigated; both are complex multifaceted projects that explore places through story.

End Matter, commissioned by Artangel as part of their Open competition for site-specific proposals, is made up of a book, *End Matter* (2015), a three part audio walk *The Loss Adjusters* (2015), that was installed on the island of Portland and is now available online, as well as a broadcast adapted for BBC Radio 4 entitled *The Quarryman's Daughters* (2015). Little distinction other than context is made between the project as a whole and the novel which forms one element of the work. The italicised *End Matter* will here refer to the book only, and End Matter will refer to the larger project.

Weerasethakul's Primitive (as with End Matter the italicised *Primitive* will refer to the installation only, and Primitive to the whole project) is a project made of elements that all root themselves in the Thai border town of Nabua. Commissioned in partnership by Animate Projects, Liverpool's FACT and Munich's Haus der Kunst it includes the feature film *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* (2009) inspired by the book *A Man Who Can Recall Past Lives* (1983) by the monk Phra Sripariyattiweti. *Primitive* (2009) is a seven screen installation and two short films released online, *A Letter to Uncle Boonmee* (2009) and *Phantoms of Nabua* (2009), as well as a publication produced as the second instalment of CUJO magazine.

Palmer and Weerasethakul collaborated with many individuals and organisations to bring these multiplatform projects to fruition; they also adopted many different roles themselves in order to tell their stories. To represent the diversity of the many crafts which they coordinated and implemented for the purpose of telling stories they will rather than artist, author, director etc. they will be referred to as practitioners.

Humanity's movement online has reframed every form of communication. The big change that the internet caused is our new "ability to encode and transmit visual and aural data efficiently" across an international network. (Ryan 2006: 148) This has at once broadened and narrowed our viewpoint. It is now a natural feeling to inhabit cyber-space, but this has also emphasised the physicality of our primary world, truly made us aware of the meat-space we have to inhabit.

The electronic age is one of "secondary orality, the orality of telephones, radio and television" dependent on text for its existence (Ong 1982: 4) - although obviously an extension of this secondary orality, the online experience is in some ways closer to primary oral communications. Interactions

online are largely text-based and dependent on programming code, as well as generally being informal and conversational. Theorists like Robert Glenn Howard believe we are seeing a return to a "participatory culture" akin to when we were a predominantly oral rather than literate society, where we engage as creators, editors and sharers of content rather than simply consumers (Owens 2013).

The internet has then irrevocably changed the way we consider story and how we interact with it. Hypertext for example challenges all linearity of narrative (Ryan 2006: xv). Where once non-linear narrative may have been a post-modern subversion, now it is possible to read non-linear texts as reflections on how we interface with text daily. Now there are inescapable connotations of the network: "The notion of the postinternet encapsulates and transports network conditions and their critical awareness as such, even so far as to transcend the internet" (McNeill 2013: 214). The notion of narrative is itself changed by the widespread influence of internet-folklore, the narrative content created and spread online through hyperlinked text, memes and shared authorship.

Fairytales and folklore belong chiefly to the very old and the very young; those that exist at the edges. Traditionally these are the marginal sections of society that are willing to believe in the magic of stories (Porter 1974:128). There is similar marginality to the online experience. Online we exist in the comments sections; we are links in the chain of shared content but more rarely the originators of narratives. The experience of being audience and disseminators at the edges of the internet parallels oral folkloric experience. And so although in the popular imagination 'folklore' may refer to historical rural stories, in reality folklore we can see that in reality it encompasses all stories generated and disseminated by any community of people (Dundes 1965: 2) including communities whose ties are all virtual.

Storytelling has always had a strong relationship with place, in large part due to the fact that communities are so often built around a communal use of specific locations, but information communication technologies now allow communities to build up around shared virtual spaces. The reality of virtual spaces, at once present and absent, I believe becomes an important tension in works that toy with post internet-folklore. The End Matter website describes the project as an unreliable investigation into the loss on the island disrupted by the writer's presence (2015). Weerasethakul in an unpublished artist statement described Primitive as a reincarnation of presence and absence, and of cinema as a means of transportation away from our own world (2008). These practitioners explore the lines between worlds through narrative interaction with real and virtual spaces. The projects looked at in this essay fulfil the same role to their audience as the fairytale does the child: through shared narrative they form "an interpersonal event" (Bettleheim 1978: 152). Practitioner and audience both taking equally important roles, interacting with the network of story which is created.

A chapter will be dedicated to each project, End Matter and Primitive respectfully, and each will be explored separately. It is the intention of this essay to analyse the structures of these networked projects and the relationships created between elements. The individual elements of each project will not be considered 'post internet-folklore' but rather this term describes experience of the space between them that has been shaped by the practitioners and negotiated by the audience. The expectations and practises of the audience are possibly more influential over the understanding of the works than the practitioners, and would certainly dictate how they are engaged with. This essay

will explore the extent of this influence and the methods put in place to engross and interest an audience post internet-folklore.
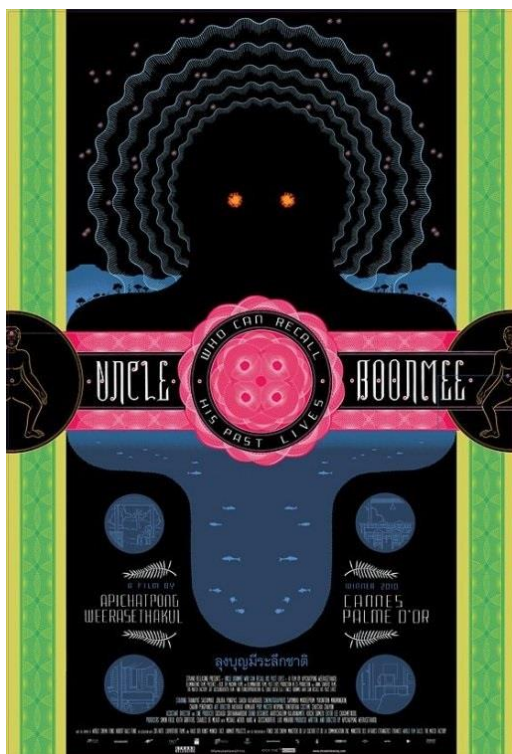

Fig.1 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* poster
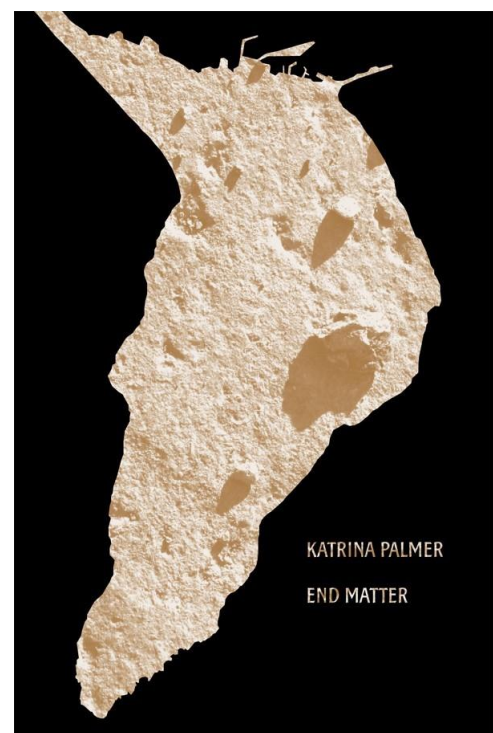(Weerasethakul 2015)

Fig.2 *End Matter,* book cover
(Palmer 2015)

Chapter One End Matter

Tell her to make me a cambric shirt,
Parsley, sage, rosemary, and thyme;
Without any seam or needlework,
Then she shall be a true love of mine.
-Scarborough Fair

I   In End Matter Katrina Palmer set herself a folkloric endeavour, the ill feted proposal   is summarised by her creations The Loss Adjusters as the impossible task to "successfully produce a book that is at once *complete* and *nothing but* end matter" (Palmer 2015:74) But like every hero set to an impossible feat she manages it with deftness and imagination. Palmer is a self-described sculptor that predominantly works with found objects, in End Matter the object she has found is the Ilse of Portland, a quarry island which continues to sustain lengthy and fractious loss. Palmer moved to Portland to create the project but to do the impossible required her to also place herself firmly within the fictional narratives by her creation of the Writer-In-Residence, who she lends her voice to in the audio portions of the work. The project works to adjust for the increasing absence of the place by the telling of, as Palmer has envisaged it, the stories of the island; however storytelling here is itself as much her subject matter as it is her craft. End Matter was realised through Palmer's winning of Artangel/BBC Radio 4 Open competition, which asked for site-specific proposals to transform the UK's cultural landscape. (Sawyer 2015) Due to Portland being a source of stone for countless sculptural and architectural projects Palmer found a landscape that had already been transformed through its physical contributions to British culture. "The entire island is a Portland stone memorial, carved out and immense, shaped by convicts and quarryman, […]and perceived as an ongoing sculptural production, created by loss" (Palmer 2015:12) in End Matter Palmer's attempts at transformation is really a narrative compensation for the loss endured by the island.

Palmer is one of many artists that have come to consider the novel as just another medium at her disposal. Her novels are concerned with "the ways in which fictional narratives alter our experience of space" (Langley 2015) She is a practitioner that uses storytelling as sculpture, Walter Benjamin has been a key critic in the understanding of storytelling, but his differentiation of the novel as sitting outside of storytelling can be interpreted as a mistake. His complaint is that the novel "neither comes from the oral tradition nor goes into it". (1936:5) In Palmer's work, set on the haunting decaying island observed by the otherworldly yet familiarly bureaucratic Loss Adjusters, there are elements of gothic literature which has historical roots firmly in fantastical oral storytelling (Jackson 1988:38). The importance of sustaining an orality in tale telling is to suggest to an audience that this process is one of duality, the teller and audience are part of circuit both crucial to the existence of story. But we should expect contemporary storytellers to actively adopt new technologies appropriate to their work; as tellers of folklore have always done this. Despite notions of the purity of oral narrative and connotations of rurality, folkloric narratives have always existed and evolved between written and spoken versions and the jump from page to screen is not a contradiction. (Warner 2014:44)

We are all post internet people now. This simple point is easy to ignore or apathetically accept but there are moments when it feels like an invasion where I feel I have been changed without my knowledge or permission and I am unfamiliar with myself. When I am unfamiliar with a word I hold it down to highlight and Google it, when it took whole seconds for me to realise that I couldn't do this to a printed item I knew that something in me had been realigned. I have waited for maps to turn around when holding them upside-down, and had the urge to pinch together my fingers to zoom in on mirrors and windows. As I realise my mistake underneath the instant feeling of idiocy and the anger at the technology for changing me I can't deny that in the background there is always a disappointment in the limitations in the physics of meat-space.

The processes we use to communicate come to define what it is that we say (Ong 1982:22). The physical reality of reading text in a book, of turning pages that are fully formed and unchanging rather than it appearing in pages on screens, changing at the mercy of our clicks, is an experience we take for granted and we forget that the book is a storytelling technology. The majority of text that is produced now will never have physical manifestation and this must surely affect our relationship with it. The Loss Adjusters are the standout characters Palmer creates in End Matter; they are bureaucratic creatures who task themselves with metaphysically accounting for all loss. Their files and forms are presented as text in *End Matter* and read aloud in the audio works in such a way as to suggest they are fixed documents. However we learn within the narrative that The Loss Adjusters keep the 'files' within their collective minds, a curated collaborative memory bank. Appropriated words like 'file' now have such duality in their connotations as physical and virtual 'objects' that it is clear why Palmer would play with them. Despite their cabinets being empty and their files stored in their minds, The Loss Adjusters are described as taking and printing photos. There are photos in the book, presumably theirs an apparent contradiction, they exist but if the narratives are to believed they can't. The physical book in the new context of digital information is an increasingly static, solid object, while text grows ever more ephemeral. Narrative, especially those presented by Palmer seems to shift between the two.

It is important to recognise that End Matter is a work that exists across three elements which all ask the audience to physically respond. While the text is concerned with cultivating loss and the adjustments made for that loss. In *The Quarryman's Daughters* the line "Because the stone had been taken away from under my feet I was becoming more aware of my own physicality" (Palmer 2015) is repeated, reflecting how interaction with the text can be destabilising. Whether it is through taking the journey with the audio guide, interfacing with the website, purchasing the book and holding the archive which only exists within the Loss Adjusters' heads, each element draws attention to the audience's own participation in the storytelling process.

II   Kenneth Goldsmith's description of how we wander around the Web "at the same time aimless and purposeful' (2011:219) illustrates how I first came across Palmer's project. Looking through BBC Radio iPlayer I was searching for something to listen to when I recognised Palmer's name and found *The Quarryman's Daughters*. While listening to the play I followed trails of hyperlinks and navigated the End Matter website, discovering the other elements to the project. The hyperlinked-mentality is a defining feature of post internet-folklore, not simply as a force

from the practitioner to create an interlinked self-referential project, but a necessary feature in the audience.

Palmer's writing evades linearity, and encourages its audience to make connections and navigate the narratives for themselves. These mechanisms place Palmer's writing within a canon of post-modernist literature, but this does not seem to be a satisfactory explanation. Their implementation makes more sense if they are considered in the context of our changing relationship with story due to adapting by technologies, which is marked by the new reading strategies an audience is willing to perform. It is the audience that experiences the non-linearity as akin to the hyperlinked texts interacted with online, the entire internet can be considered one large *multi-entry point text* (Greene 2004:104). And in this way the elements of the End Matter project replicate an interactive network.

Palmer has not only created a multi-faceted project, but also asks for a multi-disciplined audience, the Art Angel website describes End Matter as "a series of narratives for listeners, readers and walkers" (2015). There is an expectation of input from the viewer whom Palmer meets on equal ground, you are allowed to take your own direction when exploring the work but are directed in how you traverse the landscape. Palmer's self-description of sculptor that uses words reveals her physical understanding of our relationship with text, and this work heightens the importance of actual space. Critic Jamie Sutcliffe writes that to understand how End Matter "performs its absences sculpturally" you have to "read, listen *and* walk the narratives" (2015) these physical and physiological acts emphasise that the audience really is an active agent in the work.

There is a distinction to be made between the 'live' experience of the work in the summer of 2015 when visitors could enter 52 Easton Street and complete the walk on Portland listening to *The Loss Adjusters*, and the after experience of the narratives only as listener and reader interacting online and with the book. That is not to say either is lesser but each must be different. Of course it is always possible to visit Portland with a download of the audio, but there cannot truly be an expectation that everyone that wants to engage with End Matter will be able to do this.

I have come to realise my interaction with the work has been largely archival, interacting at a distance from the reality given to the stories. I listened to the audio walk sitting in a room over 200 miles away from Portland and the radio element I heard only as a feature on iPlayer not the live broadcast. My only primary/physical interaction has been with my copy of the book, but in the text we find a faux-formality of appendixes and addendum and the bureaucratic tone of the Loss Adjusters matter. These choices by Palmer make the reading experience something more akin to navigating an archive of documents, possibly inevitable when creating work out of only end matter.

Figure.3 No. 52 Easton Street, The Loss Adjuster's Offices, (Evans 2015)

For a project where everything references a lost or imaginary text it has accrued a large amount of its own end matter, which was certainly of benefit when researching. For example without completing the walk, all knowledge of it is secondary from written reviews. What is also left is the PDf which b-side presented to those preparing to complete the walk. A purely informational document it now exists as left over document, its own kind of end matter. It still describes the route, public transport and appropriate footwear with photos of key points of the route in effect working as a map with which to navigate the island but now also provides an understanding of the work for those that were never there. In part this is the role which all of the texts, written and audio, perform for the audience. They act as guides to the island of Portland; however End Matter is tied to series locations, including the innumerable resting places of the stone quarried there, and specifically the addresses No. 52 Easton Street, Easton, Portland DT5 (the office of the Loss Adjusters, see fig.3) but also https://www.artangel.org.uk/project/end-matter/ (the main presence of the project online). Both addresses can be considered starting points in End Matter, from there through a network of associations the fuller story of the project unfolds.

Figure.4 The Loss Adjuster's Offices (Palmer 2015)

III   There is an apparent *democracy of content* online that presents everything viewed on the screen as possible, and so everything online can be believed in or everything could be lies. The deadpan presentation Palmer employs in her work replicates this potential truth in every sentence. The characters speech is unnaturally scripted, their conversations are more like pockets of internal narration, text is presented with paperwork formalities, and it is hard to distinguish the stories within stories from the writings about and around the project. A similar feat is undertaken in the audio works, the first opens with the hum of photocopier, the walk begins in the vacant office which Palmer described as having an atmosphere of sickliness (2015). There is a banality in these constructed places and banality feels honest. As human beings we want to believe in the fantastic and Palmer, by coating her fantasies with a dour reality, gives us permission to believe.

The intriguing banality of the worlds Palmer creates is met with the fantastical sense of folklore. A significant way in which she does this is her use of the definite article. She transforms her characters into archetypes of her own design, 'The Writer-In-Residence', 'The Loss Adjusters', 'The Rogue, 'The Carniter and The Court Leet' and so on. The authority of these titles suggests a shared foreknowledge that we might be expected to possess in the same way as when speaking of The Fool or The Lovers. The definite article lends a sense of Geoffrey Chaucer's Canterbury Tales (The Knight's Tale, The Miller's Tale and so on) something she has alluded to before in her work *The Fabricator's Tale.* Here again it seems appropriate with Chaucer's history of incomplete and varyingly ordered manuscripts. Palmer's choices seems to adopt the techniques of the teller of fairytales, with no need for "throat clearing" a true fairytale has the courage of its convictions, speaks plainly to its

audience and gets on with telling the story. (Tartar 2015: xiii) We can see this too in the first sentences of the *Outro*, *Attachment* and *Appendix (b) The Rogue and the Carniter* which have the rhythm of Grimm or Schönwerth;

> The Loss Adjusters are at all times woeful: an inherent disposition confirmed by their proximity to Portland stone.
>
> The quarryman had two daughters.
>
> The Rogue Loss Adjuster travelled by stagecoach from London to Portland in a pair of heeled and ribboned shoes. (Palmer 2015: 5, 21, 33)

The Rogue Adjuster is perhaps the best example of Palmer's penchant for quickly mythologizing an idea in her readers mind. The Rogue is a legend to the fictitious Loss Adjusters; he exists for them as another absence. Their files on him are missing. We learn of the idea of him in the Backstory but as we read the Writer-In-Residence's story of *The Rogue and the Carniter* we get details of his nefarious dealings, using his position of power for personal gain and ignoring the principles of the Adjusters. But this is a story inside of the fiction, one which we read only because of the Loss Adjusters deciding to analyse the tale. However, their blurred ideas of reality means both they and we question the historicity of the tale within the fictional world Palmer has created.
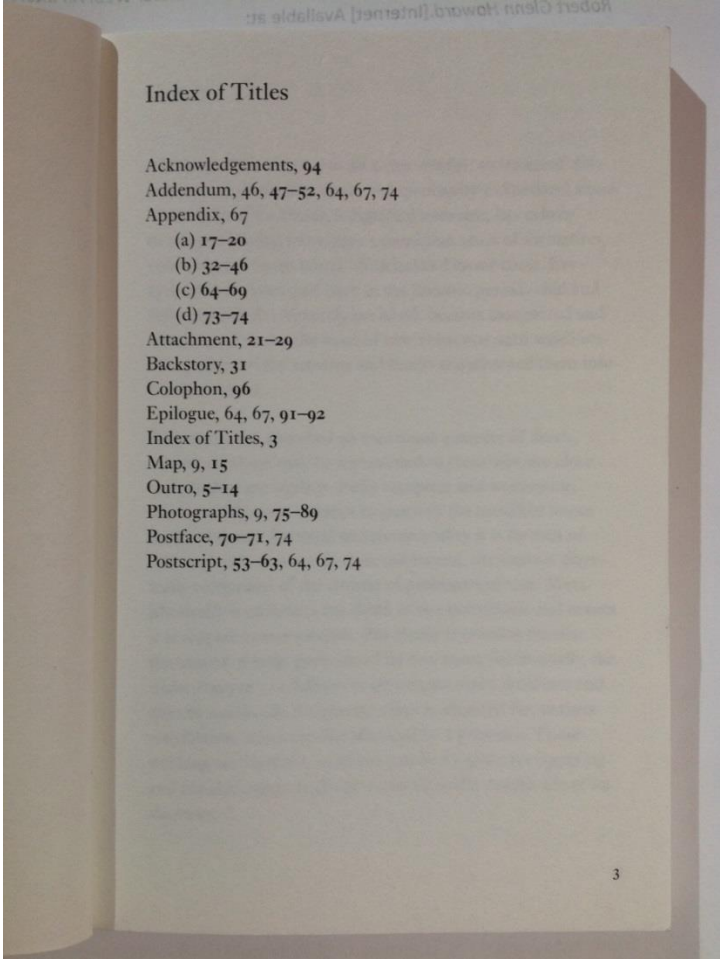
This is the difficulty in discussing the plot of End Matter, we are working from scraps of information carefully sewn into an intricately detailed tapestry of Palmer's design, where the closer you look the more intriguing embellishments you find, but try to see the whole picture and everything is far too complicated to make full sense of. To explain here any linear narrative is to follow one path and never cross many.

Following the *The Rogue and the Carniter*'s tale to its eventually fatal conclusion it can be seen how it intersects with the story of The Grave Digger's end. He finds the body and as an ex-convict cannot risk being implicated, so he buries it, digging out a grave in the stone ground. He then holds the promethean task of pushing the stone displaced by the buried corpse in his wheelbarrow. The writer-in-residence is audience to the body being moved in the barrow and then later sees only rocks and stones. This gives Palmer a chance to indulge in wordplay and double meaning, when the writer-in -residence remarks that "the missing body matter still troubles me", referencing both the disappearance of the corpse and her self-imposed task of writing only in end matter. (Palmer 2015) To be audience to End Matter is similarly troubling. The complicated narratives stop and start, independent of but criss-crossing over each other. The tangled threads of plot are offered but left without true resolution.

In Palmer's words End Matter is an exploration in the "emergence of fictions" in a place, she creates the stories imagining how people might need to "make things up as kind of a compensation" for the loss experienced on the island (2015). By creating a project so full of loss, so abundant with absence she forces the audience into the position of the characters on Portland. The literary landscape she creates is unstable so the audience has to work to give themselves foundations, they compensate by searching for the links between the elements elaborating in their minds on the secondary world Palmer has created. This is not unique to Palmer's writings of course, many engagements with text are absent of images or sensations beyond those conjured up by the audience, but End Matter highlights the audiences obligation to do so due to the particular content and form it takes. There is

a constant awareness of absence in End Matter and as the characters on the island are made more "aware of their physicality" because of the stone taken from under their feet, the audience is more aware of their own role in compensating for the inherent absences of purely textual or aural work. Through making us aware of our part in the process of the storytelling Palmer makes Loss Adjusters of us all.

In the information age oftentimes *to know* something is actually *to know where information is*, that is to say we are ever more reliant on interfacing with networks of recorded information as these networks become easier to navigate. This has an inevitable influence on our ability to retain information; this has been an issue since the inception of recording through writing. Plato wrote on the deficiencies of writing, how a reliance on external reminders can lead people to cease to exercise memory. (Cooper 1997: 551) The listener's relationship to the storyteller is dependent on their "interest in retaining what he is told" when the listener believes he can simply reproduce the story he has no interest in being affected by the narrative. (Benjamin 1936:370) Palmer combats this with her complicated narrative web forcing the audience to realise that each experience of End Matter cannot be simply replicated, and so we invest our interest in remembering. Palmer taunts her readers with an *Index of Titles* at the open of the book, it at first suggests there is order which can be retained but its contrary nature quickly defeats ideas that this is an easily navigated archive.

Fig.5 *Index of Titles* from *End Matter* (Palmer 2015:3)

It is a confrontational page that takes on the form of the helpful index, a supposed point of interface with the text as a whole; it simply lists alphabetically the various forms of end matter that make up the body of the book, but serves so little of its assumed practical function that it becomes more a piece of conflicted ornamentation. As a list is unsure where in which world it sits, it lists itself alongside all the fictional narrative elements, as well as the Colophon and Acknowledgements which are more grounded in our primary reality. It acts to further blur the lines between the different realities of Palmer as the over-arching practitioner of the project and as the Writer-In-Residence her fictional counterpart. It is an obsolete guide to an artwork that acts as guidebook to the fictional and real landscapes of Portland, a junction where all the threads of plots cross and loop back on themselves. The *Index* embodies a hyperlinked-mentality that pervades the work, a mentality that is somewhat necessary to fully explore the project.

IV   Storytelling was once a strictly communal affair, adults gathered round fires swapping stories, fairytales were overheard by children not told to them. (Bernheimer 2010: xix)The experience of Post internet folklore is in ways one of 'overhearing', this is how an audience can come to End Matter. The narrative is less sought out than it is stumbled across. There is too an attempted rejection of authorship, the book bares Katrina Palmer's name and the stories are of course hers, but there is the pervading sense that what is presented to the audience is a series of found narratives, set about in documents authored, discovered and presented by different fictional beings.

Author Kate Bernheimer argues "All great narratives are fairy tales" I am inclined to agree with her. (2010:xix) I would include the story of End Matter as well as the stories within *End Matter*. It is in the nature of reading or listening to imagine images and sensations of the internal narrative. But when experiencing End Matter I also imagined the alternative experiences of reading and listening whilst walking/existing on the island. I compensated for the absence that was I was made aware of, imagining a secondary engagement with Palmer's secondary world, and in that way I performed as a Loss Adjuster.

The radio adapted element has in reviews generally been considered the weakest, critic Miranda Sawyer suggested the transfer to radio lost the "elusive beauty" of experiencing the narrative physically immersed in the rocky landscape. Sawyer had a particularly unique experience of the project completing the audio walk in the presence of Katrina Palmer during an interview. The projects emphasis on absence is reflected in its design as a provider of heavily individual experience. The book can really only be read by one person at a time, and although the walk could be completed in groups it required headphones so each walker listens alone. The forty-five minute radio element was listened to by many thousands simultaneously; the live broadcast was began with a short documentary exploring and explaining the project, perhaps overly contextualising the play. However, now only the twenty minutes of narrative can be listened to online on BBC Radio iPlayer, an archival virtual space that must be navigated through hyperlinks. Perhaps in its current form as a remnant of a now lost broadcast it is more appropriate, itself a piece of end matter within the network.

When I tried to map out the threads of plot in End Matter I ended up with a tangled map of lines connecting events with repeatedly complicated clarifications of when things happened, and whether they were real or imagined events documented by the fictional writers of the text and whether they had imagined or real consequences for the other characters. I noticed that while attempting to remember the plots in my head things that were said aloud by the voice actors I had in fact only ever read in the printed text. This confusion only forced me to listen to and read the narratives again and upon revisiting them I have found that the work retains both its ability to entertain and confuse me.

The narrative's crescendo begins with a running horse, shaking the loose rocks crushing Celastine's home. In the audio works Hazeline declares "I had no choice but to let that stone absorb your death" to a presumed dead Celastine (Palmer 2015). Portland being made stone made from the compressed bodies of Jurassic animals has absorbed much death. However assumptions of Celastine's death are the product of misdirection and pattern forming, across all three elements. In truth, at least in the truth of the narrative, it is the Writer-In-residence who dies off. And so at the end of the book the success of the writer is realised as she writes herself out of existence. She cultivated loss and so inevitably she ended up disappearing altogether.

The entire project cultivated loss, the broadcast, the installed audio walk both existing for a short time had to end. What remains is not the project as it was, nor is it simply documentation of that experience. Rather what we are left with is a negotiable network which we are free to explore for ourselves, which is now reliant on the structures and processes of the internet both technically and metaphysically, it exists between states forever referring to its self.

Chapter Two Primitive

Tyger! Tyger! Burning bright
In the forests of the night;
What immortal hand or eye,
Could frame thy fearful symmetry?
-*The Tyger*, William Blake

In the last title card before the footage begins in *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* a quote is shown in Thai and English from the book that inspired the film; it reads "Facing the jungle the hills and vales, my past lives as an animal and other beings rise up before me." It seems appropriate to describe the entire Primitive project as "facing the jungle" as it is an ever present figure across the elements. In many folklore canons entering woodland signifies the movement into a different reality with a new set of rules. Sometimes this is a long journey into the deep dark wood, a walk in the forest at the edge of the village, or as in Thailand entering the jungle. This trope follows into all kinds of storytelling and Weerasethakul identifies this place in film and television as the 'cinematic-jungle' an imagined terrain alive in the collective consciousness fuelled by its presence on screen. He draws attention to the cinematic-jungle immediately in using a soundscape of whirring and chirping crickets and cicadas, over the opening credits. This signals that we are entering a place of fiction, what will happen is fantastical. It is a sequence that declares; suspend your disbelief and look to the jungle, see what fantasies lurk there.

Figure.6 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

In interview Weerasethakul has described watching "the screen" as like "our ancestors watching fire in caves" (2012) for him there is a primitive naturalness to flickering lights and storytelling. The entire project explores of film as a medium; across the installation Weerasethakul uses a variety of cinematic styles from documentary to drama. In *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives*, like many of Weerasethakul's films, watching is rather like walking through a dream. Filmed on 16mm the tactile nature of its production infiltrates every aspect of its viewing, the audience goes through a very physical experience, as with the rest of the project. Here Weerasethakul uses cinematic devises which emphasise the time spent sitting and watching, which achieves a greater awareness in the audience of their own presence in front of the screen and their relationship to it.

He has also described how he believes human memory is cinematic (Weerasethakul 2015) this may come from the watching of films or because we make films as a reflection of how we 'view' our memories. We do often use our minds eye as a camera, taking a series of close ups, panning shots, and slow motion sequences etc. It seems to be a symbiotic relationship, with technology allowing storytellers to see the world in new ways, while influencing the content of the stories they tell. Weerasethakul uses film to interrogate the human relationship with the medium; his often dreamy and memory-like style uses vagueness to his advantage. Bettelheim wrote that the "deliberate vagueness in the beginning of fairytales symbolises that we are leaving the concrete world of ordinary reality" (1978: 62) and so it is here, for the audience everything seen is to be questioned.

Figure.7 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

The feature film's opening footage is a long sequence of a black buffalo escaping its rope and walking into the edge of the jungle only to be found and walked back out to the fields by a farmer, this all happens as almost pure silhouette set against a twilight jungle of green and blue. These first few minutes are a slow and beautifully introduction with a ghostly atmosphere which is which ends with the strange image of a black ape with glowing red eyes standing amongst the trees staring into the camera. This is followed by the title card and quickly moves into jittery sequence inside a car traveling in bright daylight that feels much closer to our primary reality, this juxtaposition of the real and the marvellous shows the film is toeing the line between realities. The audience is lulled

peacefully into Weerasethakul's world to be shown the unbelievable things there. Weerasethakul has described his material as illusion, all film is innately illusionary but he enjoys drawing attention to it; he has been known to tell actors that start behaving too naturalistically in front of the camera to "Act as if you're in a movie"(2010). He asks his audience to accept that all is illusion and to be on board with that premise, this deal with the audience reflects a contemporary self-awareness of recorded footage. He is a practitioner exploring film as a craft and has no need to pretend otherwise.

Figure.8 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

II   The magazine CUJO , is a project in its own right from Andrea Lissoni which invites artists to create and be involved throughout the entire process to craft publication. Each is printed as an edition of one thousand and then distributed by hand at various locations in the world. Three copies of the magazine were presented alongside the installation when displayed at Tate Modern (Lissoni 2009). The magazine, really a book of almost five-hundred pages, is dense with content. It tackles the complex narrative work of Weerasethakul's Primitive, acting as a field guide to the project, a diary, an archive of documentation and storybook. It acts as the most concrete point of contact with the project; it requires the most intimate physical contact and is the only element without sound. As a guide it is too overflowing with information than can be usefully navigated and has to be flicked through, focus given to details, to collections of pages rather than the whole. In this way it rather reflects human interaction with the internet, or any network too large to comprehend, never seeing the whole but exploring the details in an attempt to understand.
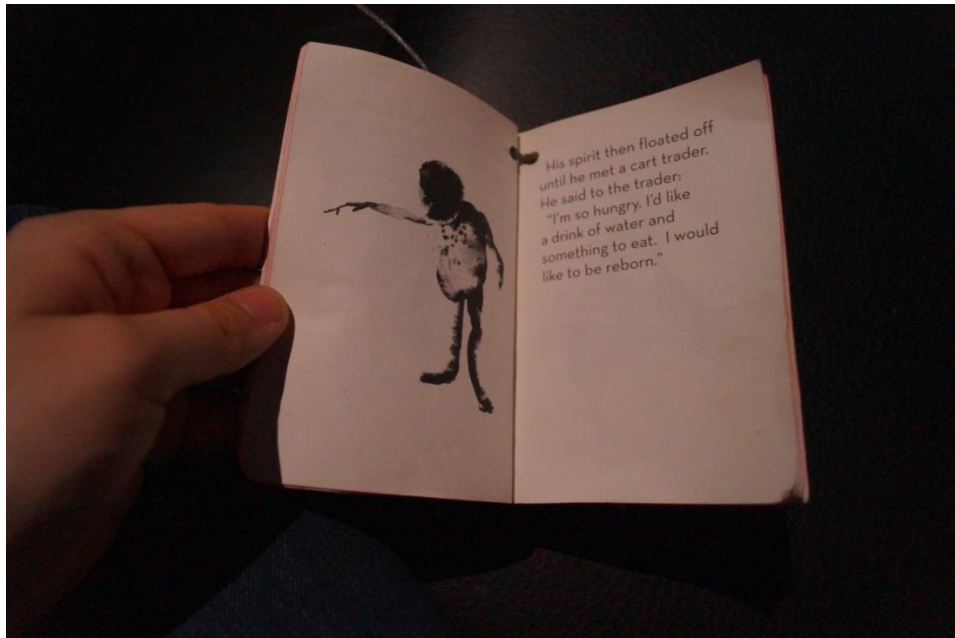
Figure.9 Primitive CUJO (Weerasethakul 2009)

Walking into *Primitive* at the Tate Modern's Tanks was my first contact with the project. Stepping in to the arena like space I was aware of the how much smaller I was than the work all around me. My first instinct was to move to the red middle space with carpet and beanbags waiting, not unlike an oversized version of my primary school's reading-corner. I sat in the light of the projected screens and listened. Stories were being told in film all around me of the children of Nabua, of Weerasethakul's journey to produce his film, folktales from the region and the bloody history of the town. My eyes flicked around, to focus on any one narrative I had walk up to each screen. It struck me that walking around this room was something like the experience of whiling away hours on YouTube, clicking through videos leading to more videos an endless stream film.

Figure.10 *Primitive,* installation view at Tate Modern (Mawdsley 2015)

Online content is inherently spatio-temporal (Ryan 2006:37) there is a need for navigation of the virtual space we interface with, generally an audience feels that they dictate the terms of this relationship. But in reality the parameters of code and the technical capabilities of the interface affect and often impede our negotiation of online spaces. This negotiation of networked content is explored in the installation *Primitive* through the physical set up of the space. This installation *Primitive* has previously been presented at a number of institutions including; Haus der Kuns in Munich, FACT Liverpool and Musee D'art Moderne De La Ville De Paris/Arc. Weerasethakul has said that "for [him] it's like a movie in operation" (2015) the screens show research, action and footage, almost like being inside an editing room. The audience is always presented with the seven films of varying content, genre, length and screen size, wherever the installation is displayed the audience will be required to make decisions about how they view the work as they walk from each screen to the next providing many potential unique experiences of the work.

The presentation of *Primitive* at Tate Modern (see Appendix.2) also included the short films and copies of the CUJO publication, illuminating the wider network. These elements were shown to be components of the whole project but were distinguished as works in their own right. *A Letter To Uncle Boonmee* was shown in a partitioned room, and the books were given a differently lit, both allowing them to be read but also allowing the audience to somewhat step outside of the experience of the installation. The networked nature of the project is revealed in this way and so it can then be further explored primarily online through repeated access to the short films, and learning of the installations relationship to the feature film. Of course this chain is only one possible experience a key property of such a networked project is its multiple-entry points. An audience may come across any single element to begin a relationship with the project.

 Gottschall described humans as storytelling animals; he looked to biological, psychological and evolutionary necessity to understand why we have what he terms 'storytelling minds' that will always strive to find narrative. He reasons that the storytelling mind is "allergic to uncertainty" an "addicted to meaning". (Gottschall 2012: 102) These afflictions are played with by Weerasethakul, as he gives the audience enough rogue elements to start creating a pattern, making us want to see a story. Through experiencing his project Primitive one wills a larger narrative into existence. There is a deft balance between a teller and listener of tales, good storytelling requires an expectation of generosity in terms of interpretation from both parties (Bettleheim 1978:25) Weerasethakul's attitude embodies this generosity. When asked about the various, frequently incredibly idiosyncratic interpretations of his work that he was pleased to know "that the film has a life of its own" and that people are able to "take their own experience into it" (Weerasethakul 2010). He creates a web, a network to be explored; the less finished the elements are the more connections there are to make, he is careful to craft an infinitely interpretable canon of stories.

Figure.11 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

III   Boonmee, the dying central figure of the feature film, has relatives and stories circling him as he approaches his end, the raw human experience of death is explored with fantasy. Twenty minutes into the feature film during a conversation at Uncle Boonmee's dinner table his late wife literally fades into the shot (see fig.7) and sits down joining the family for dinner. Beyond an immediate momentary shock, mostly from Boonmee's nephew, she is quickly accepted and engages in conversation which understandably then focuses on the years spent apart and what happens next. This is hastily followed by the reintroduction of the black ape, he walks in again with little disturbance and reveals he is Boonmee's long lost son who has become a ghost monkey after having mated with one. His appearance prompts Jen, Boonmee's sister-in-law, to simply ask "Why did you grow your hair so long?" (see fig.8). Notably it is the older characters are more quickly accepting, an example of the "immemorial marvellous" (Warner 2014: 20) an often distinguishing feature of folkloric narratives. Achieved here by being "shot with a kind of flat, matter of fact eye of somebody who this stuff is not spectral and weird but strangely down to earth" (Kermode 2009).

Figure.12 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

The assumed role of the film is to create a world where the audience can fully enter into a secondary world, Weerasethakul's long lingering shots, ambiguous sequences, brief to the point dialogue and brief to the point actors all work to drive home the point that you are watching a film. The deliberate drawing of lines does not prevent you from entering the secondary world but rather allows you enter fictional narrative fully. In this way children are satisfied with the violence and cruelty of fairy tales because they draw their lines clearly, opening with 'Once upon a time' for example and so it is understood that although truth may be discussed in fairytales, they are not true, and inside the tale this is acceptable. In *Uncle Boonmee* Weerasethakul presents a film about a man on the verge of death and the line between the realities of this life and the next; past lives and reincarnation are common beliefs in Thailand's common consciousness and not to be made light of. Weerasethakul has previously had to deal with censorship from Thai authorities for exploring uncomfortable ideas (Weerasethakul 2015).

In Primitive Weerasethakul challenges and provokes within the world he has created, in the feature film there is a degree of safety but the installation, which deals with narratives about and beyond the film, is in his words "more focused on the political resonance" (2010). The installation *Primitive* explores the sometimes bloody history on Nabua of racial strife and political violence. In the 1960s to 1980s it was a 'red-zone', and the Thai army killed many of the local farmers for being communist (Tate 2016). Weerasethakul investigates this through the teenage descendants of the lost farmers, working with them to unlock a past they don't remember themselves but have access to through inherited story. In the installation a number of the screens give time to the construction and use of a space ship built by Weerasethakul and local teenage boys in the rice fields of Nabua. This clunky, static, interstellar vehicle that acts as a place of gathering becomes almost symbolic of the strange familiarity the project evokes. Through this process he is able to interview them, create stories with them and discover the narrative resonances of Nabua.

J.R.R. Tolkien theorised that all of tellers of stories or rather 'creators secondary worlds' wish in some ways to be real world-makers or at least for the "peculiar qualities" of their secondary world to

flow into reality (1947: 14) *Primitive*'s challenging politics and strength of narrative force blurred lines between its internal and external realities, Weerasethakul said it contradicts itself as a "fictional part which has a documentary feel"(2015). A solidified example of the flow of Primitive into the world was how he felt it was important to leave the spaceship behind rather than uproot it and tour it as part of the work. He had helped create an object but also a space that was used and enjoyed by the people that were crucial to his project (Weerasethakul 2015).

Figure.13 *Phantoms of Nabua,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

IV   **Phantoms of Nabua. The video begins with a strip light suspended by a palm tree. A makeshift screen being projected onto is revealed in a dark landscape. Lightning strikes now intermittently fill the screen illuminating an area in short bursts never really long enough to make sense of the surrounding. There is a sense of distance separating us from the storm, it feels as though what we see is being recorded through a window but the movements of the panning shots wouldn't make sense if the camera was limited to the frame of a window. Then we realise we are watching the projection, we are watching lightning twice recorded.**

Boys enter the frame, raucous and kicking around a burning football in front of the projection. As it rolls sparks fly illuminating the figures in the darkness. The lightning in the projection glows a cool blue, the football burns red. As the ball is kicked it makes the whoosh of a spaceship. Eventually the ball is kicked into the screen and it too succumbs to the fire. The projection struggles to compete with the bright licking flames, until it has no surface left and only a frame is left about the size of a football goal. I'm left thinking on the inevitability of the destruction. Weerasethakul has stated "the transformation of people and light" is the concern of the Primitive project (2008). In *Phantoms of Nabua* I think a moment of transformation is captured, it is an intersection of realities and the boys are here characters, performers and themselves.

Figure.14 *Phantoms of Nabua,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

Weerasethakul makes sure to include in his work many references to his own personal mythology, in this way he allows the works to have an intimateness. The flickering strip light in Phantoms of Nabua is a reference to a place of personal significance to him. The making of a spaceship comes from his fondness for the imagery of his childhood of Science Fiction television. The Ghost Monkeys in Uncle Boonmee are plainly costumes, a replication of the physicality of props and prosthetics in old Thai cinema, the glowing red eyes a staple film signifier of otherworldliness (2015). Throughout his films an integral part of his experiential references is doctoring and medical procedures. Weerasethakul has spoken at length about his parents being hospital workers, and that he grew up around hospitals. There is a scene in the feature film which shows Uncle Boonmee having his kidney drained, shot from a single viewpoint the scene is long and while not graphic or gory it is difficult to watch. Medical paraphernalia and illness is his normal, his presentation of them as mundane in ways heightens them as marvels. A fairytale is the expression of the marvellous as the mundane.

Half way through *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives* there is a return to the jungle for a beautifully enigmatic sequence seemingly unrelated to the rest of the already sparse plot. Played entirely straight it depicts an aging fairytale princess who fears her own decay has an erotic encounter with a fish to make her young again. The weird and wondrous beauty of this sequence really needs to be seen to be understood, the straight-faced BBFC's description is good starting point:

> The sex scene takes place in a small lake, with a woman floating on her back in the water and entirely clothed. […] we see her moving about as if she is being penetrated, but her movements are not vigorous and the scene is relatively subdued and quiet. There is a brief shot of a catfish flapping about between her legs to indicate that sex is taking place, but with no actual detail. " (2015)

The utter absurdity of this sequence is matched only by how perfectly well it sits in the film. It has no bearing on other events; it shares the theme of mortality and is of course exquisitely filmed. The scene is so suggestive of physicality, of skin meeting and the weight of mortality and it achieves this with very little dialogue just a powerful fantastical image captured on film. Its 'true' relationship to the rest of the work is a mystery, and is up to each viewer to interpret. That such a seemingly

discrete story can blissfully occur within the Primitive network is emblematic of the spirit of this work as an embrace of the network.

Figure.15 *Uncle Boonmee Who Can Recall His Past Lives,* production still (Weerasethakul 2009)

Critic Zarina Muhammad revealed the embrace of the network when she reviewed *Primitive* at Tate Modern for the online critical platform The White Pube, with a literary online text (see appendix.3). She playfully responded to the installation writing that the "work is slow and hazy and [she] appreciate[d] the darkness, truly deeply" (2016) along with descriptions of her own dreams and experiences which the work cast into light. In signature 'White Pube' style it toys with conventions and syntaxes in a virtual space, more like poetry and with Instagram videos hanging below. It reflected the nonlinear and deeply personal nature of the work. Understanding Primitive as a post internet-folklore experience, this creative response to the work now exists online as part of the network of the Primitive project. Her description of the narrative as feeling echoey "like ur [sic] watching through a pane of glass" can apply to the whole project. While thoroughly engaging, absorbing even, it pushes back; it is immediate, yet distant.

There is now an expectation of free content. I accessed most of the Primitive project for free, even the feature film before my copy of the DVD arrived I found versions to watch online. There is also an expectation of instant gratification, never has content been so widely and quickly available to us. Primitive for me uses these new assumptions in order to combat them and so produces a complex network of stories that are easily accessed but require us work with the project to attempt comprehend it.

There is a democracy to online content, an availability to all with a point of interface (Goldsmith 2011: 154) The democracy of content leads to a state of potential belief in everything on the screen, we all have a willingness to believe/suspension of disbelief and at the same time a suspicious view that all could be lies. The screen is the great equaliser. Weerasethakul's presentation of all different genres and truth levels throughout the project leaves every strand of narrative as equals. The online spaces the project inhabits has the generosity of the storyteller with the short films are also available to all to watch freely. The installation at Tate, which is free and open to the public, appropriately made the physical point of interface with the project reflect the equality too. The network is there to be navigated and interpreted, successfully allowing for innumerable unique experiences.

Conclusion

Both Weerasethakul and Palmer's projects support their audiences in navigating the networks that are created. The networks extend beyond the crafted elements, and now have definite existence within online spaces. The works certainly suggest contemporary understanding of the processes of narrative is to be played with to properly absorb an audience. And that rather adding in variables to tailor every experience to each individual the practitioners rely on absences for the audience to fill. The uniqueness of the experiences of individual members of an audience through a personal exploration of the projects seems to be a defining feature of both works. Although both include elements that are to a degree shared; the audio walk, and the installation space. The nature of these elements creates a shared space but still has an individualistic reception of the content. Any "interpersonal event" is primarily between Palmer and one reader, or Weerasethakul and one viewer, even attending cinema screening is a relatively disconnected one. I wonder now if it would be possible to create a similar networked experience in such a way that would replicate or reflect on the shared community experiences online.

I think that the concept of the post internet-folklore has merit and that there is the potential for further research, especially looking at other practitioners that create networked narratives across other mediums. It would be worth investigating the work of Sean Lynch, and Marvin Gaye Chetwynd both of whose work I believe could be better understood when framed alongside other organisers of multifaceted networks. There is also possibly potential in considering creators that don't exist within the fine art context, I believe that the resonances of a changing relationship with storytelling must be wider.

The implications of an evolving understanding of narrative are that changes will continue to occur. As our reliance on and apathy toward the internet grows, we cannot predict the prospective modifications we will have to make. Along with the rise of post-truth and fake news, there will surely be an impact on the way we think and react to the narratives we are presented with. And practitioners will continue to ever revise their approach to greet new audiences.

Appendices

Appendix.1 Extract from *Access Information for The Loss Adjusters* (b-side 2015:1,2,3)

Access Information for *The Loss Adjusters*

The Loss Adjusters
Open to the public 26 April – 28 June 2015
Presented on Portland by Artangel in association with b-side

Address 52 Easton Street, Easton, Portland, Dorset, DT5 1BT

Open 26 April to 28 June 2015

Opening Times

16 May to 28 June 2015
Saturday & Sunday 12 – 6pm

Project Webpage: http://www.artangel.org.uk/projects/2015/end_matter

Advance Information

For additional information about accessibility, the nature of the project, and its interpretation you are welcome to call us:

Artangel Office, open Monday to Friday, 10am to 6pm: 020 7713 1400.
The Loss Adjusters Front of House, staffed during opening times: 07530 307318

Artangel's team will do whatever is possible to meet your access and/or communication needs.

We are by request able to send copies of printed information about the work to visitors in advance.

Project Description

Katrina Palmer's *The Loss Adjusters* is artwork consisting of written material and soundtracks. The audio consists of three sound files which have been conceived to be listened to at specific locations on the course of a circular route across the Isle of Portland. The audio has a running time of 30 minutes.

Katrina Palmer's Artangel commission also consists of a book 'End Matter', which contains related documents, stories and investigations written by the artist; and a radio programme 'The Quarryman's Daughters' that will be broadcast on Radio 4 in Autumn 2015.

Further information about the project and associated events is available on our website at www.artangel.org.uk/projects/2015/end_matter

The book can be purchased onsite at 52 Easton Street for £8, cash only, and from Book Works: http://www.bookworks.org.uk/

We strongly advise visitors to download the audio files for *The Loss Adjusters* to a mobile device (mobile phone, MP3 player, tablet) from our website in advance of their visit, and to bring this device and a set of headphones with them to Portland. For those unable to do this, MP3 players and headphones will also be available to borrow from at 52 Easton Street.

Getting to 52 Easton Street, Portland

By Public Transport

The nearest train station is Weymouth, which served is by South West trains from London Waterloo, and Bristol. Weymouth Station has step free access.

The Route 1 bus runs from Weymouth station departing from Kings Statue (North-bound) stop on the Esplanade every 10 – 20 minutes. Alight at Grove Corner and walk back down Easton Street to number 52, located on the East side of the street.

A map of local bus routes is available for download here: https://www.dorsetforyou.com/travel-dorset/bus/bus-stops-and-routes-in-Dorset. Local buses are not wheelchair accessible.

There are no traffic lights, dropped kerbs or tactile paving on Easton Street.

By Road or Taxi

The drive from Weymouth to Easton on Portland takes approximately 20 minutes. There is a taxi rank immediately outside the station.

Car Parking

There is a free long-stay car park in Easton with a capacity of 26 spaces. The postcode is DT5 2BJ. There are further free car parks elsewhere on Portland. A map of all of these is available from https://www.dorsetforyou.com/travel-dorset/roads-and-driving/parking/car-parks-in-dorset/map

Location

The work begins and ends at an empty shopfront and office at 52 Easton Street Portland DT5 1BT. This building is staffed during project opening hours and assistance in accessing the work and understanding the route is available from an Artangel representative.

From this location, visitors may borrow headphones and MP3 players which should be returned at the end of the walk. The deposit of a credit card or equivalent item may be requested against the loan. Printed information, including a map of the route, will also be provided at this site or can be requested advance from the Artangel Office.

Access to 52 Easton Street is through the front door via a single step from street level. The doorway has a raised threshold and is 90 cm wide.

The interior spaces are dimly lit by fluorescent lights and the windows are blacked out. All three rooms have sections of carpeting laid on them which create an uneven surface underfoot. One room is accessible only via a small staircase of three steps with a handrail.

An invigilator will be stationed in the front room of the Loss Adjuster's office. They will be available to provide assistance in accessing the audio.

Route of Walk

The experience of listening to the audio work is intended to begin at 52 Easton Street where three rooms on the ground floor are open to visitors.

The route then heads north up Easton Street before turning onto a public footpath. The route will be marked by red indicators stencilled onto stones.

The second and third audio files are to be listened to at points indicated on the map. The walk is self-guided, with some way-finding along the route. The duration of the walk will vary but it is anticipated it will take most visitors around 60 minutes, including time to stop and listen to the audio pieces.

The terrain varies a great deal throughout the walk. We recommend visitors bring appropriate footwear for hiking and prepare for the possibility of wet weather conditions. Between 52 Easton Street and Listening Point 2, some sections are on pavement, but much of the walk follows narrow grass and gravel footpaths. There are several instances where the path becomes rocky and muddy and where visitors will need to climb small, but steep hills. Between Point 2 and Point 3, the walk passes along a narrow and overgrown path near the fenced off edge of a quarry and through the local cemetery. The last section of the circular route, between Point 3 and 52 Easton, runs alongside and across Wide Street, a busy road with no traffic lights, and along a path used by industrial vehicles serving the quarry. Please see attached images for more detailed information.

Assistance animals

Assistance animals can be accommodated within the venue and along the walk.

Interpretation and supplementary images

An information leaflet about Katrina Palmer's work and this project is available onsite and copies can also be obtained in advance from our website as a PDF or in alternative formats by contacting us on 020 7713 1400.

Appenxix.2 Online review of *Primitive* (Mohammed 2016)

*** i dream in Bengali.
    slow cloudy scenes
        my limbs are sticky from the mist
    and when i wake up i almost forget alwaysssss ***

Like licking a soap bar or peeling off ur nail varnish, a slow strange alien feeling nearly invasive ||||| u can feel it in ur bones, it doesn't sit right, but it's also not that wrong. ||||
like a sticky slowness that only happens in dreams or in films   .

This work is slow and hazy and i appreciate the darkness, truly deeply. i have visited it so many times.

    once: when me and my boy came to the new tate on an art date.
    we curled up with pillows and i rested my head on his shoulder and our breathing fell in sync.
      second: showing my aunt from Bangladesh around London (she thought Louise Bourgeois was ¡escandalo!)
        third: on my own, bored waiting, i made use of my time with art as company, as friend.
          fourth: on an art date, we dipped in, dipped out. went to get coffee. said we'd come back but never did.
            fifth: my boy fell asleep in the darkness.

so u crawl all the way down and you enter pitch black turn the corner and you're set apart from these massive slow screens/scenes/dreams

it has a slow cooked tenderness, it melts when i chew it.

    sometimes, u see some art, and u just hold it close to ur chest and u don't know why
    i want to work thru that by writing about it

it was like smoke. i am ok with the spiritual, the ethereal. something painful to hold onto so tightly, so u have to loosen ur grip. lean in to give.
    i am ok, comfortable with mysticism.
        i am not a cynic, i can suspend my disbelief, i have felt God's hand before,,,,,
    i have seen possession by gods. it is rage and it is fury and it is beautiful so u can't help but believe it, wholly and fully. it looked like it felt like it must have been like running your finger over the thin skin of a barely healed wound. when you can feel the lumpy scar tissue beneath it, and you are soft and vulnerable and so close to being in pain but not quite but it feels half way between disgusting or quite nice actually and it's almost/almost violent.
      [like this the work was scar tissue; an underlying meaty lump of almost/almost violence - - - the
something about time and space, virtual village/documenting the goings-on, fiction and history, but something unstable and not-quite-nailed-down about it all because it felt like smoke

====================

    i have a memory; i'm not sure if it was a dream or a film or a past life;,,, a snake moving through water, purple and fat, rolling through grey waves///// a hand (my hand?) reaches down and glides along its smooth back /// the viewer/my face looks up to the horizon and sees hazy blue mountains//// i remember lights and fire and almighty noise ////// but the snake slips through my fingers and my grasp misses its tail /// my fingers are now moving through wet silty sand

have you ever seen Dil Se :::::   that's what narrative feels like here
echoey and distant, like ur watching through a pane of glass.
there's a degree of separation.

i have a t shirt that says "Are you in a film or in reality?" and i hate its irony, it sticks to my teeth i hate it i hate it and when i wear it, i feel that same feeling:::::
    that feeling of having gritty dirt stuck under your nails, and you try and slide it out with your teeth, and then it's in your mouth and you've felt your jaw move on your finger it makes u feel not quite sick, but bubbly in your stomach.
like there's an air bubble trapped but it isn't
          ::::: ye, the art feels like this

    heavy-eyed mysticism. my aunt believes in Sai Baba
    he is a saint who died, and now his spirit leaves fragrant dust where its footsteps are.
he has lived twice, and will live again before leaving again for the spirit world, for heaven or that place beyond.
[this is part of the background, this is part of me;;; i guess that's why this is relatable content]
      future / past / film / real life / it's all the same we are souls in bodies / mortal vessels here to learn lessons of love and compassion / we pass on and come back again / sometimes we remember ////////////.

i forget to remember my body [it is lost in the darkness, and i am only a viewer, i am only gaze]
    disembodied but not powerless
a gentle touch

i think that's why it feels like a dream or a film - - — - - because you're in a body, yes. but you can't see it or feel it and you forget it really.
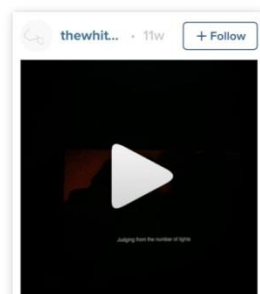
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